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PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION REPORT



LOGISTICS ACTIVITY  
NORTH VIETNAM  
1 NOVEMBER - 31 DECEMBER  
1968

NPIC/R-7/69  
JANUARY 1969

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NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION CENTER

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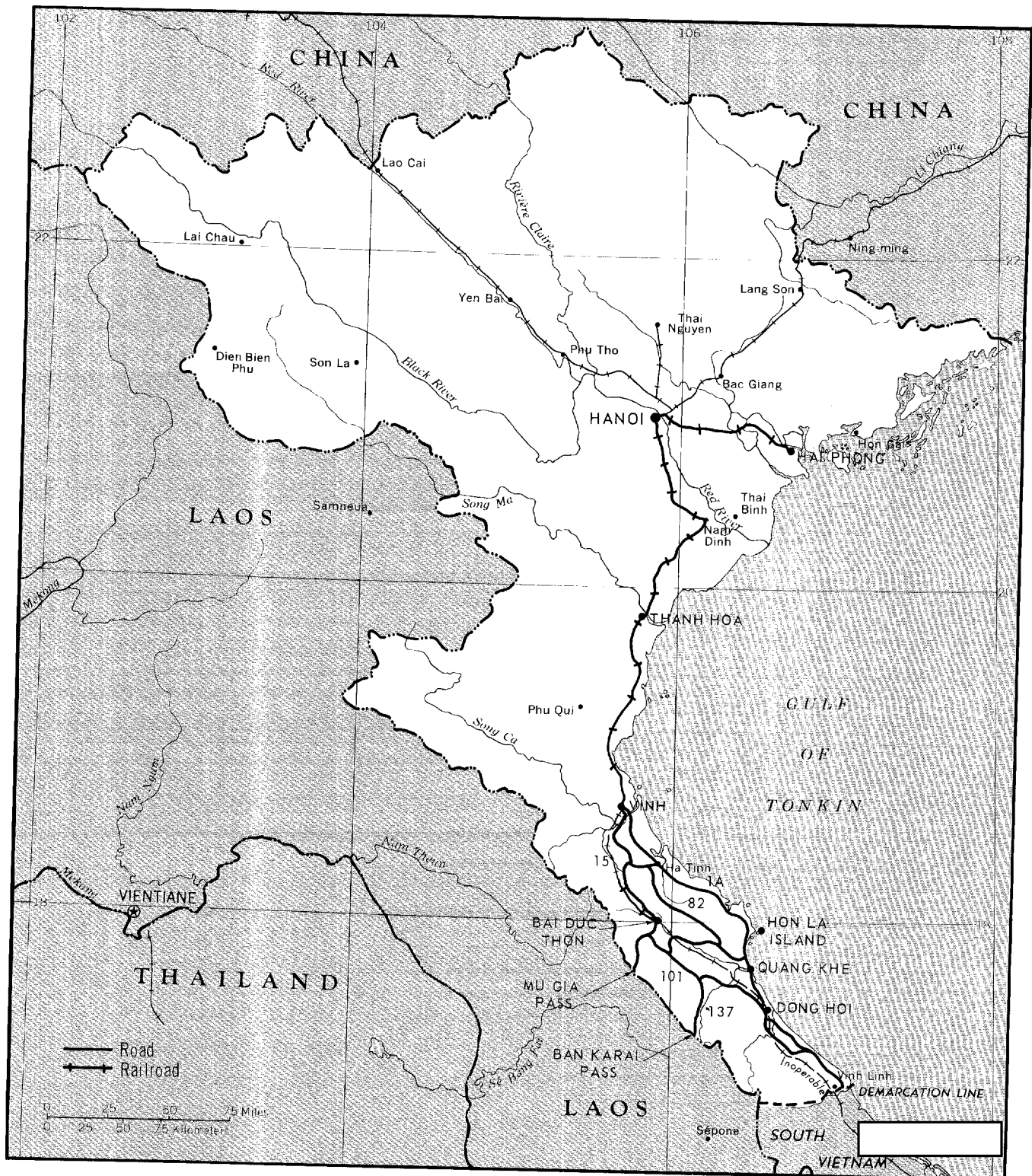


FIGURE 1. GENERAL LOCATION MAP.

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## SUMMARY

The initial North Vietnamese reaction to the 1 November 1968 bombing halt was, and continues to be, the improvement and maintenance of their lines of communication for the movement of supplies and personnel to the south. The activity, when considered cumulatively, emphasizes the level of coordination which the North Vietnamese have achieved between the road, rail, and water transportation networks. Elimination of the bombing threat has allowed the repair of the road and rail network and the freedom of movement on the coast by waterborne logistics vessels.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of vehicles observed engaging in a re-supply effort. North Vietnamese merchant ships, as well as free-world-registered merchant ships, are observed participating for the first time in the movement of supplies to the south and there is a dramatic increase in the use of other smaller waterborne logistics vessels. The reactivation of numerous transshipment points has facilitated the movement of the large volume of supplies.

## RAIL ACTIVITY

Large amounts of supplies are being moved by rail during daylight hours to support the North Vietnamese forces in the south (Figure 1). At the present time, the southern hub of rail shipments is the Thanh Hoa railyard complex. Prior to 1 November, this was also the southern terminus for conventional rolling stock. Since the bombing halt the critical rail by-pass bridges at Phu Dien Chau and Tam Da on the Thanh Hoa to Vinh line have been repaired and conventional stock is now moving to Vinh. The conventional stock arriving in Thanh Hoa is either offloaded for later movement south by lorry train or reclassified and moved to Vinh by small diesel switch engines capable of negotiating the rail by-pass bridges. Extensive repair activity is observed at the main Tam Da rail bridge on [redacted] photography (Figure 2). When completed, the

bridge will enable the heavier steam locomotives to continue through to Vinh.

Photography [redacted] revealed 197 pieces of serviceable conventional rolling stock, 107 two-axle lorry cars, eight steam locomotives, and seven lorries in Thanh Hoa. These totals

[redacted] observed in Thanh Hoa in recent years. Supplies observed included sacked goods, crated materials, POL drums and tanks, and vehicle tires (Figure 3). The amount of activity observed [redacted] is comparable to the peak of activity reached subsequent to the 31 March 1968 bombing halt when Thanh Hoa became a sanctuary by virtue of its location north of the 19th parallel.

The rail line from the 19th parallel to Vinh was serviceable for light-capacity lorry trains as [redacted] and for conventional rolling stock shortly thereafter. Both southbound and northbound trains have been observed using the line. The Vinh Railyard has been reactivated as a transshipping area and the storage yard has been freshly graded [redacted]. A lorry train was observed being unloaded [redacted] and conventional stock has been observed in the yard continually [redacted]. Photography [redacted] revealed large quantities of supplies being stacked in the storage yard, probably to await shipment further south by cargo truck (Figure 4).

The repair of the Vinh rail line and railyard suggests that some of the transshipping activity formerly at Thanh Hoa has been relocated to Vinh and that with further repairs, greater amounts of conventional rolling stock will be observed moving to the Vinh rail complex.

Photography [redacted] reveals that repair activity is continuing on segments of the rail line from Vinh to Bai Duc Thon and further south. One segment just north of Bai Duc Thon is being used at the present time to supplement vehicles in carrying supplies into the Bai Duc Thon area (Figure 5).

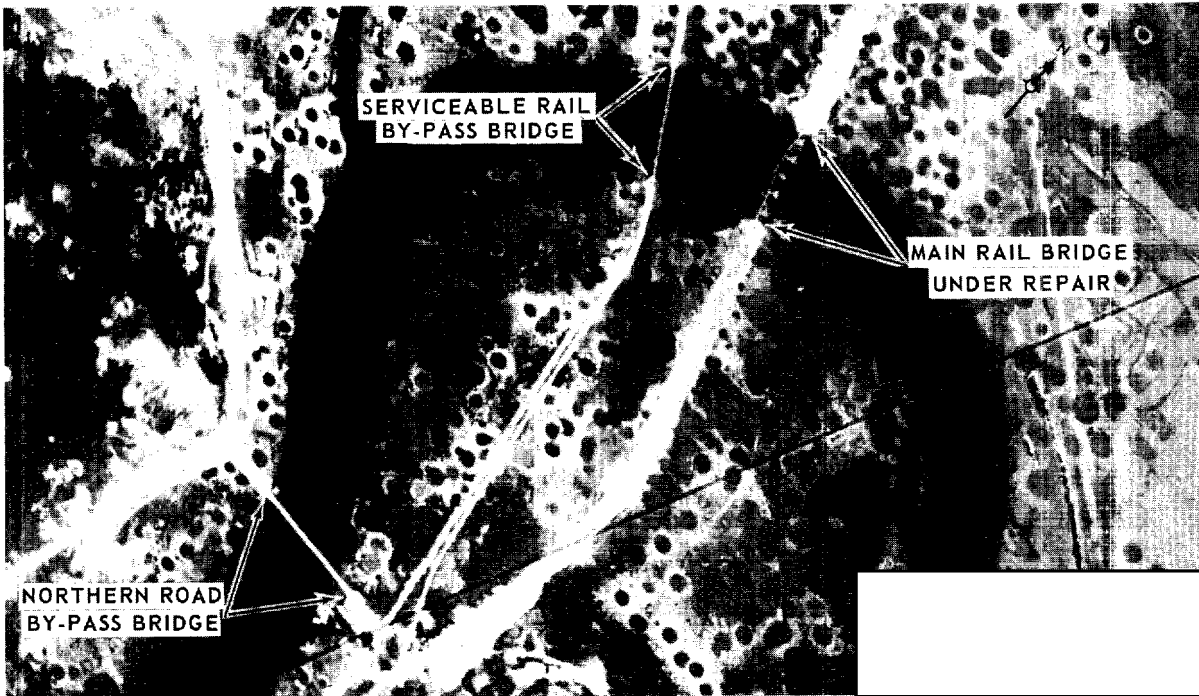
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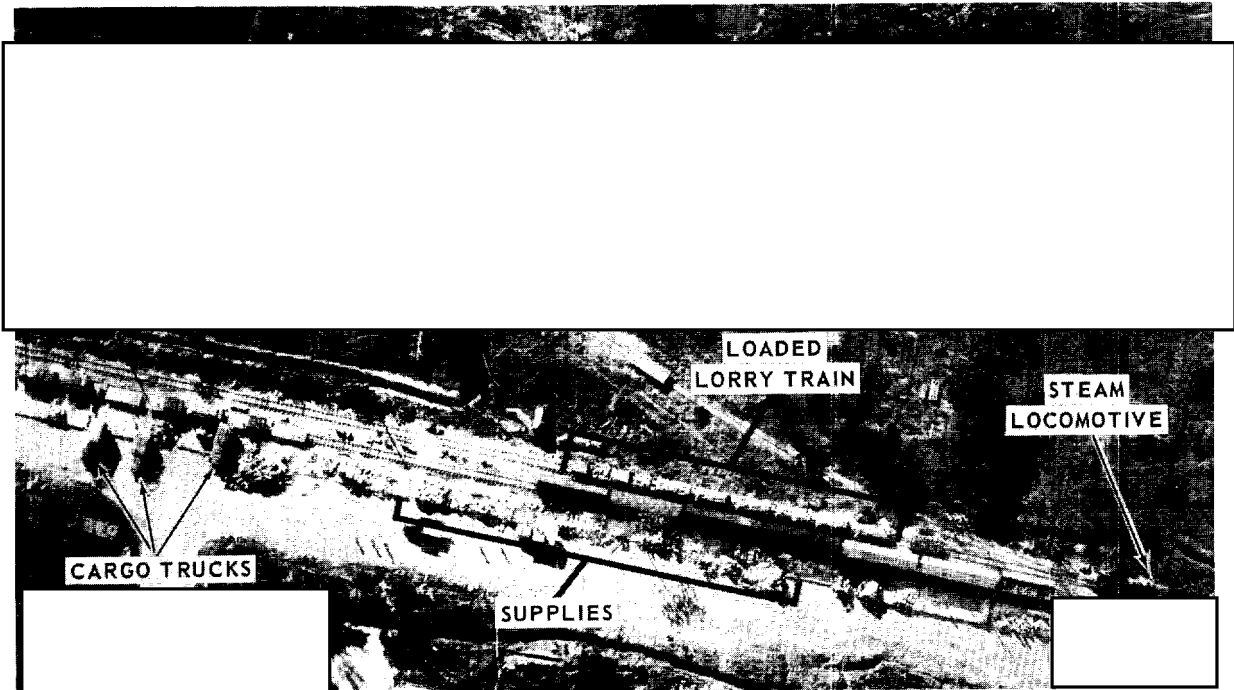
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FIGURE 2. MAIN RAIL BRIDGE REPAIR, THANH HOA-VINH RAIL LINE, TAM DA, NORTH VIETNAM.



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FIGURE 3. THANH HOA RAILROAD YARD, NORTH VIETNAM.

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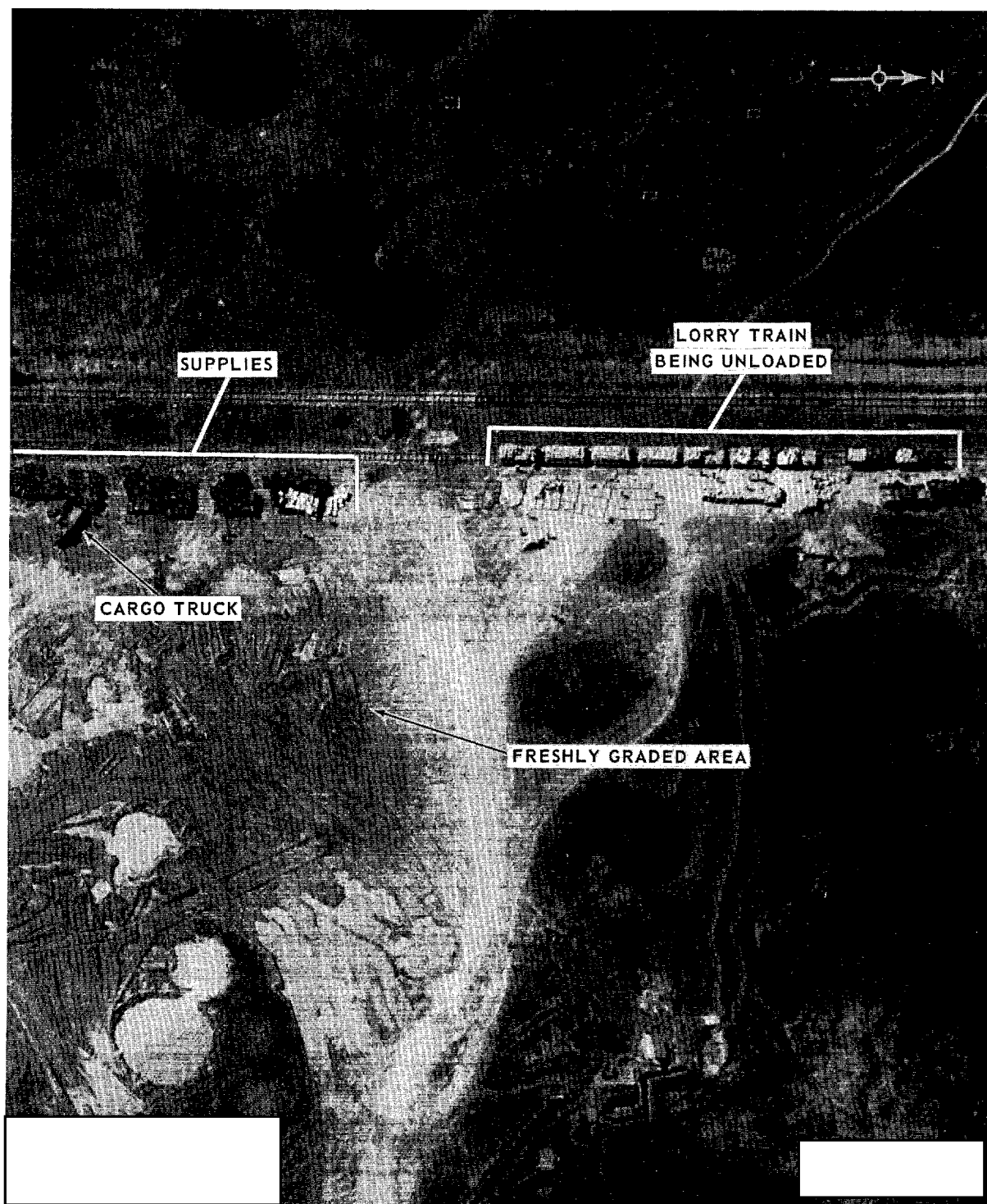
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FIGURE 4. VINH RAILROAD YARD, NORTH VIETNAM.

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FIGURE 5. VINH-DONG HOI RAIL LINE, BAI DUC THON, NORTH VIETNAM.

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**VEHICLE RESUPPLY ACTIVITY**

25X1 In addition to the increase in rail movement, vehicular activity south of the 19th parallel has increased significantly [redacted]. During the bombing of North Vietnam most road traffic attempted to follow the inland routes south. The coastal routes, such as 1A, were almost continually unserviceable during the bombing period. However, since the 1 November 1968 bombing cessation, extensive repair activity and vehicular movement have been observed on these routes, particularly Route 1A in the Vinh and Dong Hoi areas and south to the DMZ (Figure 1).

25X1D The greatest number of trucks observed on any one day during the period [redacted]

25X1D [redacted] when at least 1,135 vehicles were observed on limited coverage. This tabulation was made on major roads south of the 19th parallel and is an indication of the extensive resupply effort that is underway. Routes 1A and 15 are supporting the heaviest traffic loads. Tabulations have varied on Route 1A from a low of 22 trucks [redacted] to a high of 326 [redacted]

25X1D [redacted] Route 15 is also supporting a heavy load of traffic with counts of 494 trucks, as observed on [redacted] photography, not uncommon. Routes 101, 137, and 82 are also carrying substantial amounts of traffic. While there has been a resumption in the use of coastal routes, Route 15 and the Mu Gia Pass are still being used as part of the Ho Chi Minh trail and provide access to the Laotian road net (Figure 6).

25X1D This resumption in the use of coastal routes is probably a result of several factors. Since Laos is still subject to airstrikes, the North Vietnamese are moving within the sanctuary afforded them in their own country as far south as possible, and in some cases, to the DMZ. Furthermore, there has been a major increase in waterborne logistics activity along the coastal areas of the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. Trucks are being used in transshipment and shuttling activity in conjunction with the watercraft.

In support of the smooth flow of traffic, rest, refueling, and staging areas are required. One of the most notable is in the Bai Duc Thon area where increased activity has been observed. When

first identified [redacted] it was the largest area of its kind in North Vietnam. It now contains extensive vehicle refueling facilities, several transshipping areas, and large open storage areas with numerous stacks of supplies (Figure 7). There appears to be considerable transshipping activity in this vicinity, since the trucks arriving from the south are empty and those from the North are loaded. This activity is apparently in support of a resupply effort at least partially using the Mu Gia Pass and the Laos road net at night. Vehicles destined for Routes 101 and 137 may also utilize these facilities.

In most areas where routes had been interdicted, extensive repair is underway to keep the traffic moving. An example of this activity is at Tam Da where Route 1A crosses the Song Cua Lo, as does the rail line from Thanh Hoa to Vinh. Photography [redacted] revealed that a temporary pontoon type bridge was being used by northbound and southbound convoys and reconstruction activity was noted on one of the road by-pass bridges. Three days later approximately 250 personnel were observed crossing the pontoon bridge and reconstruction activity was continuing on the by-pass bridge (Figure 8). Coverage [redacted] showed the by-pass bridge serviceable and carrying traffic. More recent photography reveals that the pontoon bridge has been removed.

A pontoon bridge has been newly constructed in the Dong Hoi area to facilitate the movement of supplies along Route 1A (Figure 9). In addition, storage areas are being constructed in the Dong Hoi area and to the south to handle much of the material that is being moved into this area (Figure 10). Photography [redacted] provides indications of increasing activity in the area between Dong Hoi and the DMZ. Transshipment points newly constructed [redacted] are active and vehicle activity is continuing at a high level.

25X1D There has been a significant amount of troop movement observed on photography [redacted] [redacted] mainly in the Bai Duc Thon-Route 15 area. Troops have also been seen at Tam Da and near Dong Hoi. The numbers involved in each

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sighting have ranged from approximately 200 at Tam Da to more than 600 in the Dong Hoi area. There have been 20 sightings of troops numbering more than 200 each since the bombing halt. Most were moving south, some groups had packs on their backs, and on at least one occasion, were carrying possible recoilless rifles (Figure 11). These

movements have all been in the open during daylight hours, indicating a lack of concern on the part of the North Vietnamese about being attacked from the air. Whether this increase is a result of an actual increase in the number of troops or only a change in movement pattern from night to day cannot be determined from photography.

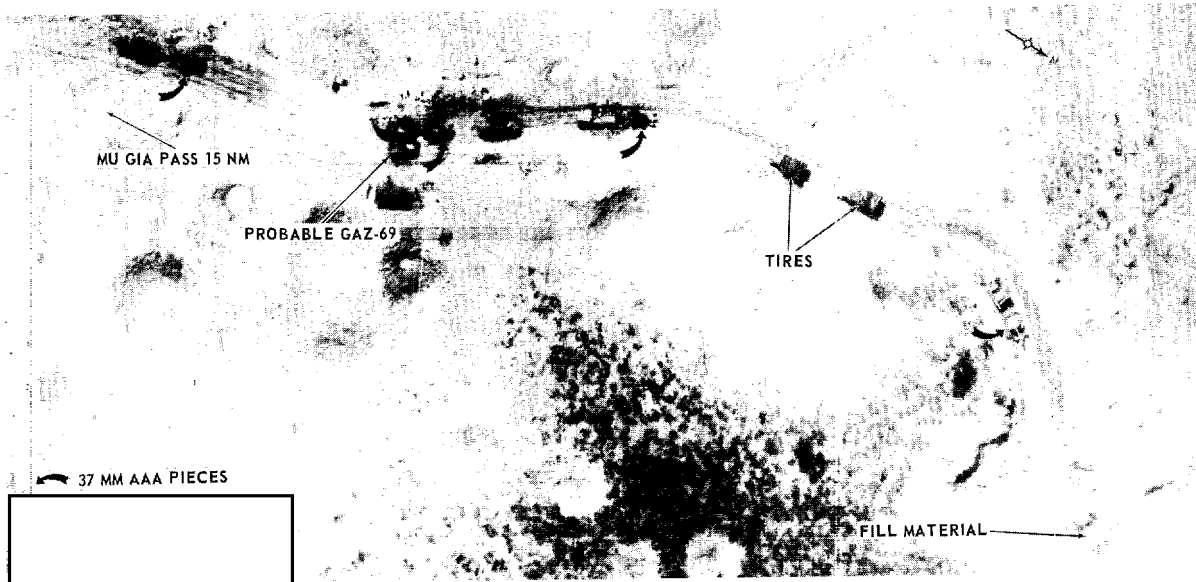


FIGURE 6. SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT MOVING SOUTH ON ROUTE 15, NORTH VIETNAM.

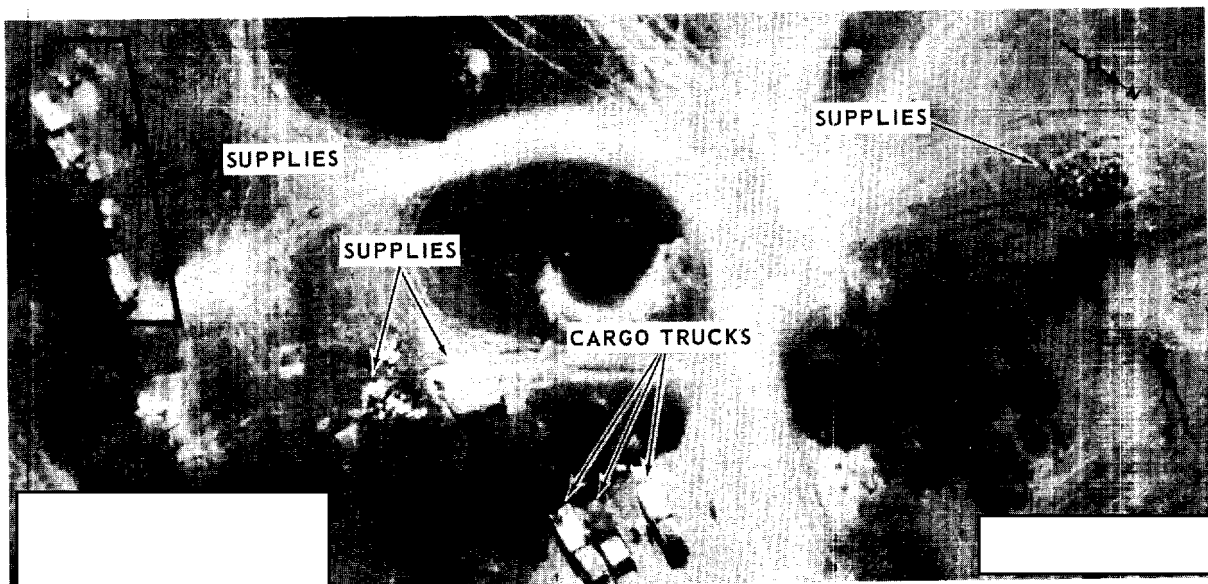


FIGURE 7. STORAGE AREA, BAI DUC THON, NORTH VIETNAM.

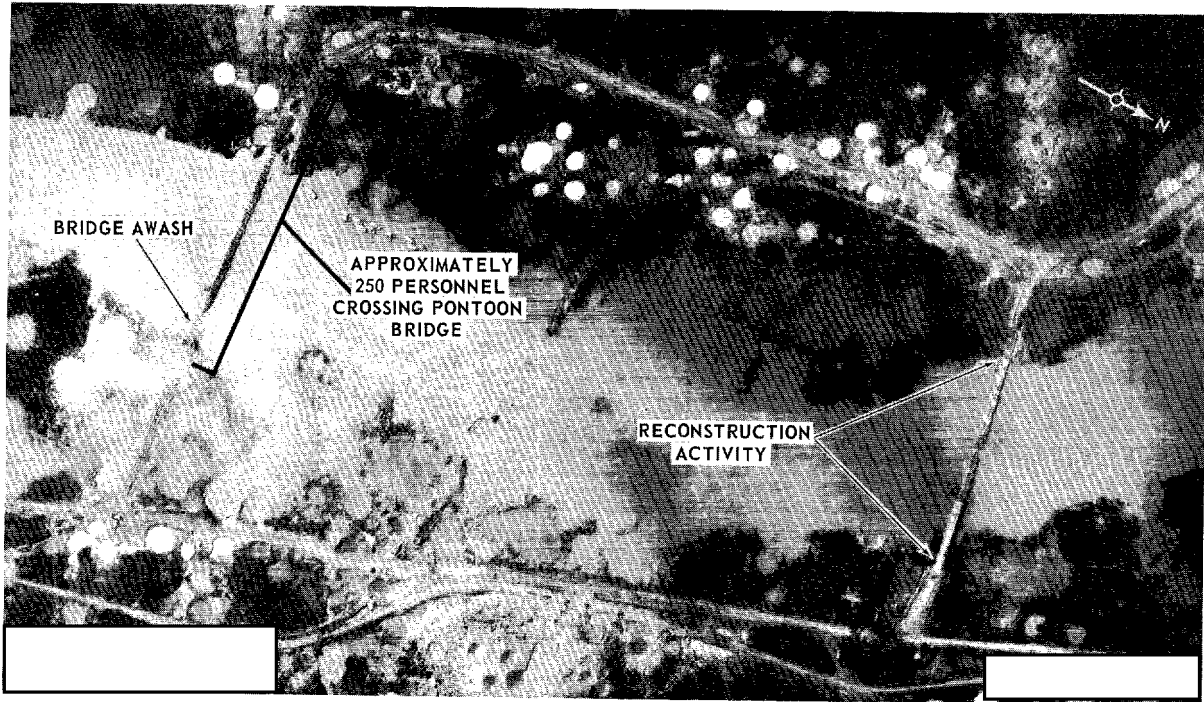
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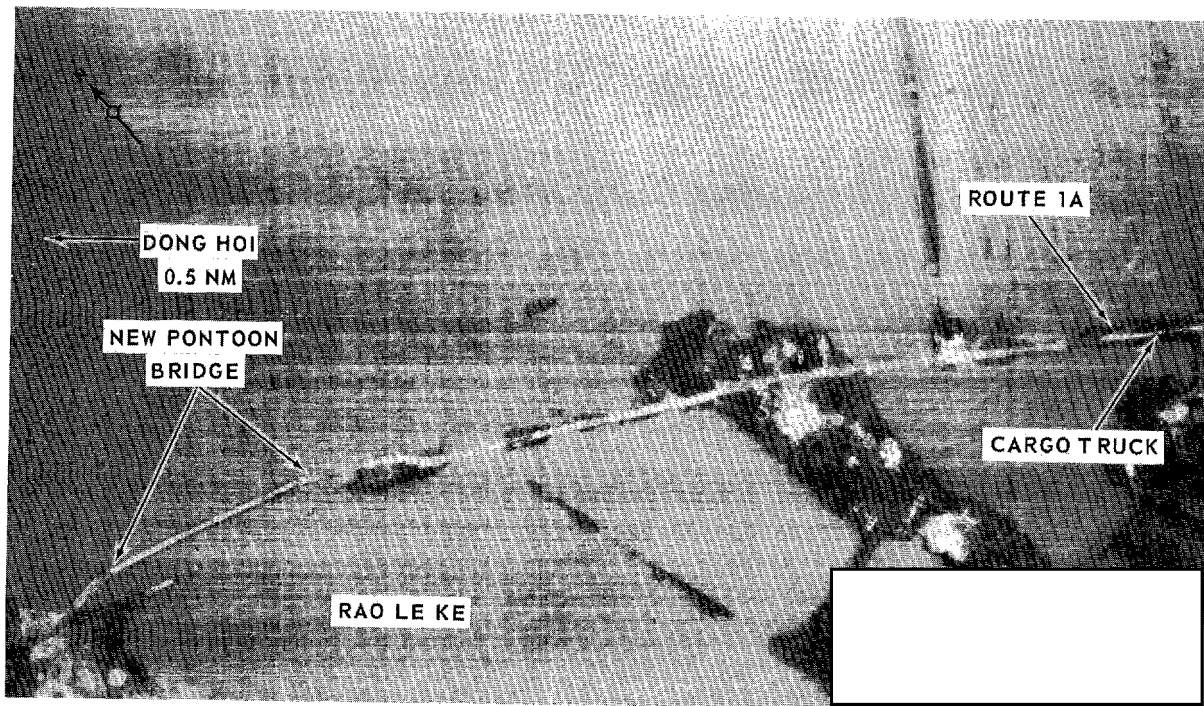
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FIGURE 8. RIVER CROSSING ACTIVITY, TAM DA, NORTH VIETNAM.



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FIGURE 9. DONG HOI HIGHWAY BRIDGE, ROUTE 1A, NORTH VIETNAM.

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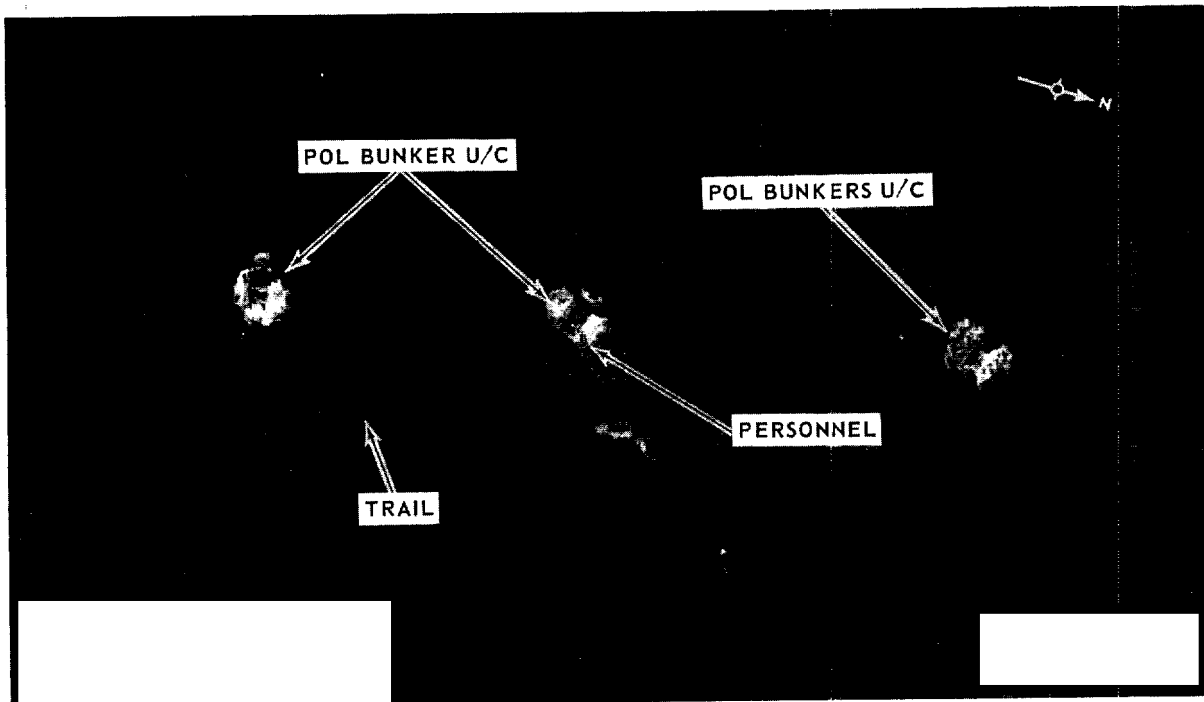


FIGURE 10. POL STORAGE AREA UNDER CONSTRUCTION, DONG HOI AREA, NORTH VIETNAM.



FIGURE 11. TROOPS WITH BACKPACKS MOVING SOUTH IN BAI DUC THON AREA, NORTH VIETNAM.

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## WATERBORNE LOGISTICS ACTIVITY

An increasing amount of waterborne logistics activity has been noted along the coastal areas and inland waterways of North Vietnam. Coastal movement of waterborne logistics craft of all types has been heaviest below the 19th parallel, particularly in the Vinh, Quang Khe, and Dong Hoi areas (Figure 1).

The most significant vessels observed in this coastal movement are the North Vietnamese-owned merchant ships "Ben Thuy", "Hoa Binh", "Thong Nhat", "20 July", "Huu Nghi", "Cuu Long", and "Haiphong." During the bombing of the North these ships sought refuge outside North Vietnam's territorial waters and only began returning after the 31 March 1968 bombing restriction. They never ventured out of the Haiphong and Cam Pha areas until the 1 November bombing halt.

"Ben Thuy", "Hoa Binh", and "Thong Nhat" were photographed in an anchorage at Hon La Island, 14.5 nm NNE of Quang Khe. The "Ben Thuy" and "Hoa Binh" were observed in Haiphong.

At the Hon La anchorage, the "Ben Thuy" was observed transloading supplies into four Type-46 coasters and an SL-1 (small logistics vessel). The "Hoa Binh" and "Thong Nhat" were riding low in the water with the hatches closed and the latter had more than 250 POL drums on deck (Figure 12). The three freighters can carry an aggregate total of approximately 4,200 tons. Throughout the months of

these freighters along with four others of the North Vietnamese fleet have been observed shuttling supplies between Haiphong and Hon La anchorage, Quang Khe, and Vinh. In addition, the free-world-registered ships "Marianthi" and "Swift Dragon" on time

is the first time in many years that free-world ships have been observed in Vinh.

Further evidence that the North Vietnamese are engaged in an increased resupply effort is exemplified by the sightings of coasters, LCMs, sampans, and SL-type vessels moving north and

south along the coast from Haiphong to Dong Hoi. The SLs (high-speed, armed cargo vessels of slightly differing types) are of particular note because of their speed and fairly large capacity (approximately 100 tons) compared to the smaller coasters and LCMs.

SL-1s have been taking on supplies in Haiphong (Figure 13) at berths normally occupied by ocean-going freighters being unloaded. This type of activity involving SL vessels had not been identified prior to the bombing halt. These supplies were probably destined for movement south since subsequent photography has revealed many of the same type vessels operating in and around Quang Khe.

Extensive reconstruction and other activity is observed at several transshipment areas at Quang Khe, Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Thanh Hoa. Quang Khe is apparently developing as the southern terminus for the SL vessels and the large North Vietnamese freighters. The SL vessels leave Haiphong and proceed to Quang Khe where they are offloaded, and their cargoes probably broken down and shipped further south. The freighters normally proceed as far south as Hon La Island where they are lightered and the cargo taken to Quang Khe. However, the "Thong Nhat" has been seen anchored at Quang Khe directly offshore. Intensive activity is observed at Quang Khe. Stacks of supplies line the bank and a POL storage area with an offshore POL transfer system with a flexible hose has been constructed. Several shelters for workers have also been erected (Figure 14). 21 SL craft were observed at Quang Khe, the highest number to date.

photography of Dong Hoi revealed no activity (Figure 15); however,

two T-head piers had been constructed 0.4 nm SW of the Dong Hoi Citadel and

a total of five T-head piers had been built. Several types of waterborne logistics craft, including LCMs, Type-46 coasters, and sampans, were observed active in the area. In addition, a ZIL-485 amphibious truck, numerous personnel, and several stacks of material in open storage were observed (Figure 16).

The reactivation of the Dong Hoi transshipment areas makes it possible for the North Viet-

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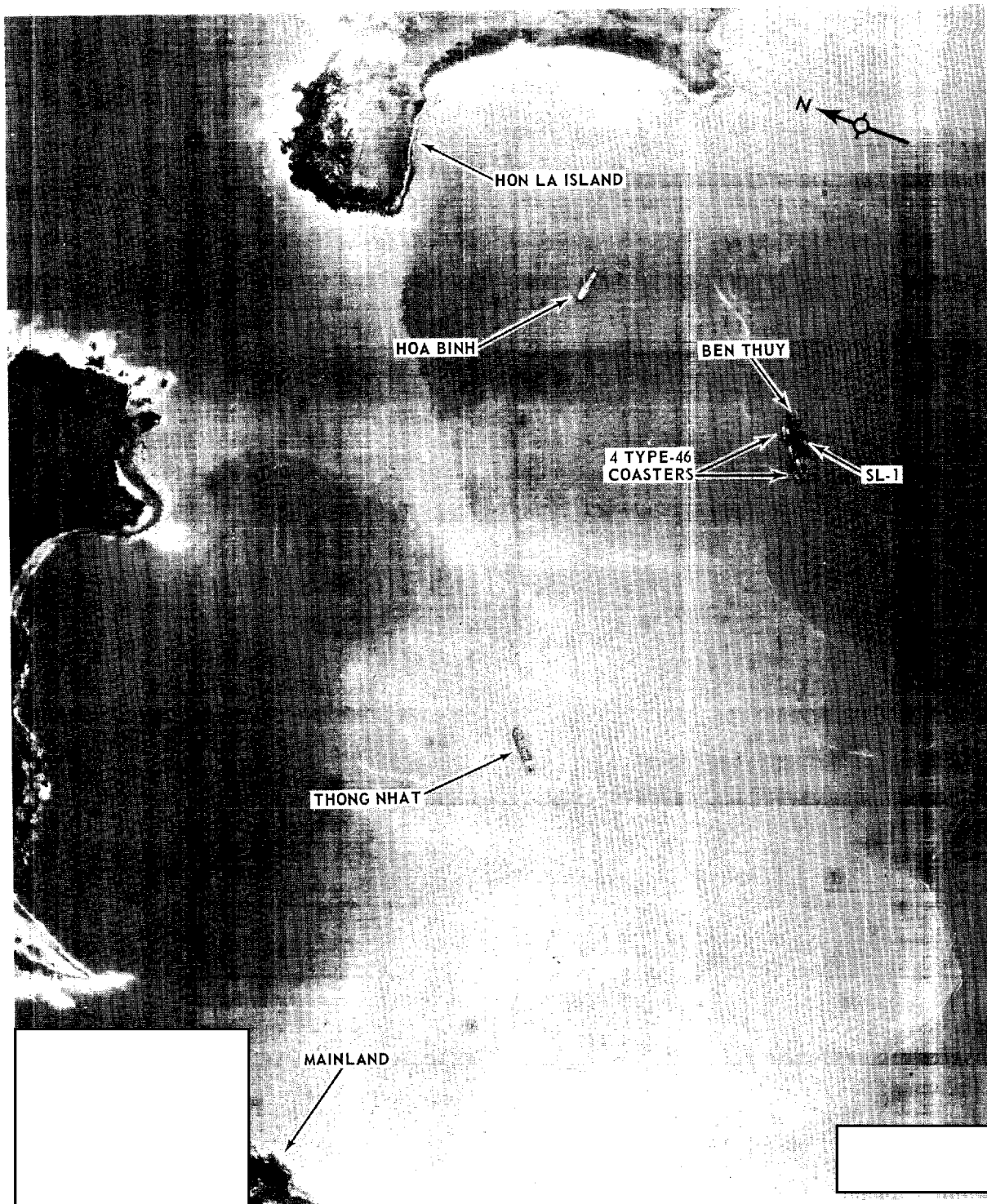


FIGURE 12. NVN MERCHANT SHIPS, HON LA ISLAND, NORTH VIETNAM.

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names to move large amounts of supplies down the coast and directly into Dong Hoi. From there the supplies can be moved further south to other transshipment areas such as the one at the Huu Hung river crossing, 4 nm south of Dong Hoi. Activity at this transshipment area is newly observed on both sides of the Kien Giang (river). Supplies are being unloaded from trucks and loaded into sampans on the northwest bank, and then ferried to the southeast bank where they are apparently unloaded and the material stockpiled until cargo trucks are available (Figure 17).

Much of the same type of activity is observed in the Vinh and Thanh Hoa areas. The Vinh

Transshipment Point Song Vinh/Hoang Mai is known to have been used extensively until heavily damaged by airstrikes. Photographic coverage in [redacted] revealed no significant activity in the area (Figure 18). Photography [redacted] revealed a significant increase in daylight activity. At that time there were six non-motorized cargo barges moored in the transshipment area, one of which was in the process of being loaded from stockpiled materials (Figure 19). Barges loaded at this point are towed by motorized river craft down the Song Ca and its tributaries to other transshipment areas that are accessible to major overland routes.

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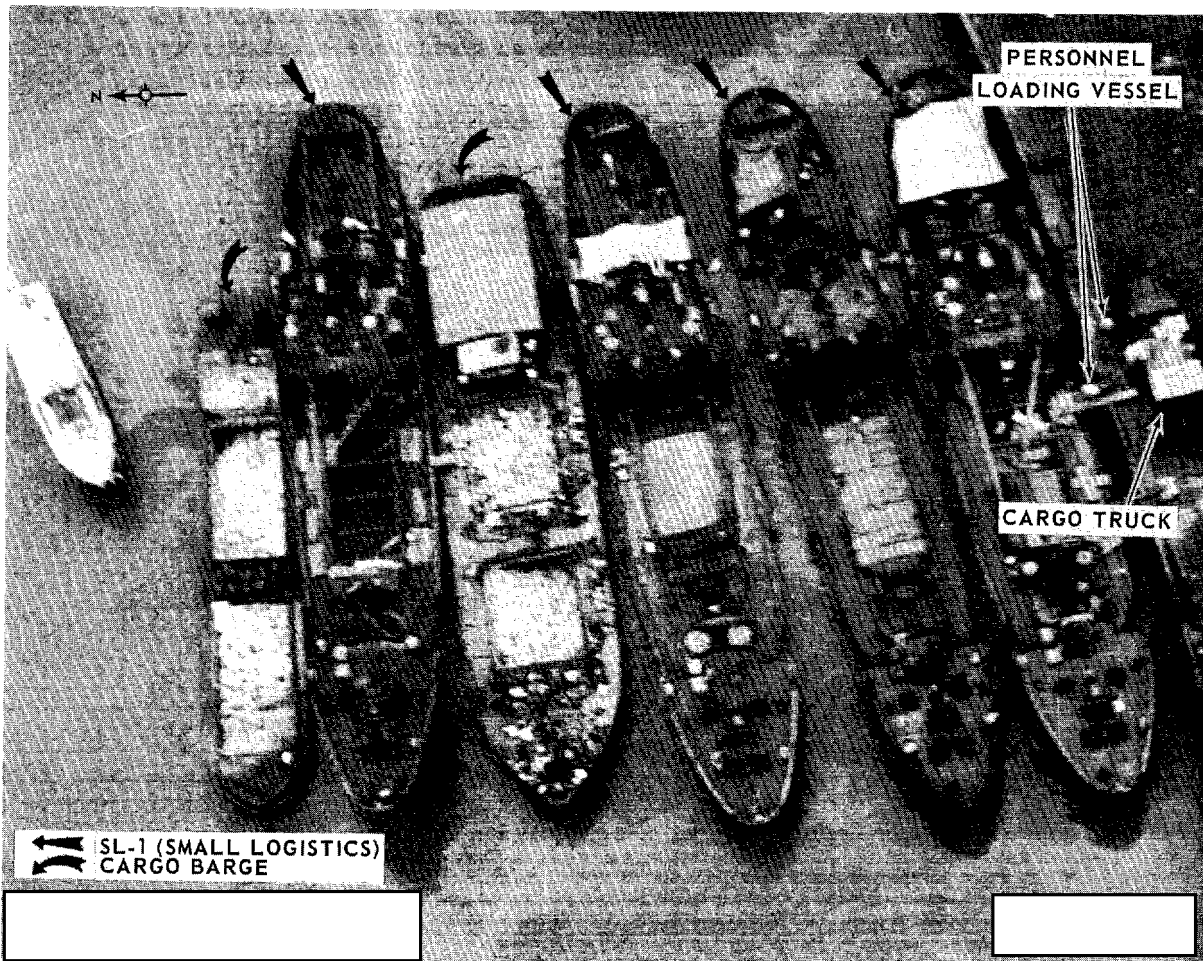


FIGURE 13. SL-1 VESSELS LOADING SUPPLIES, HAIPHONG, NORTH VIETNAM.

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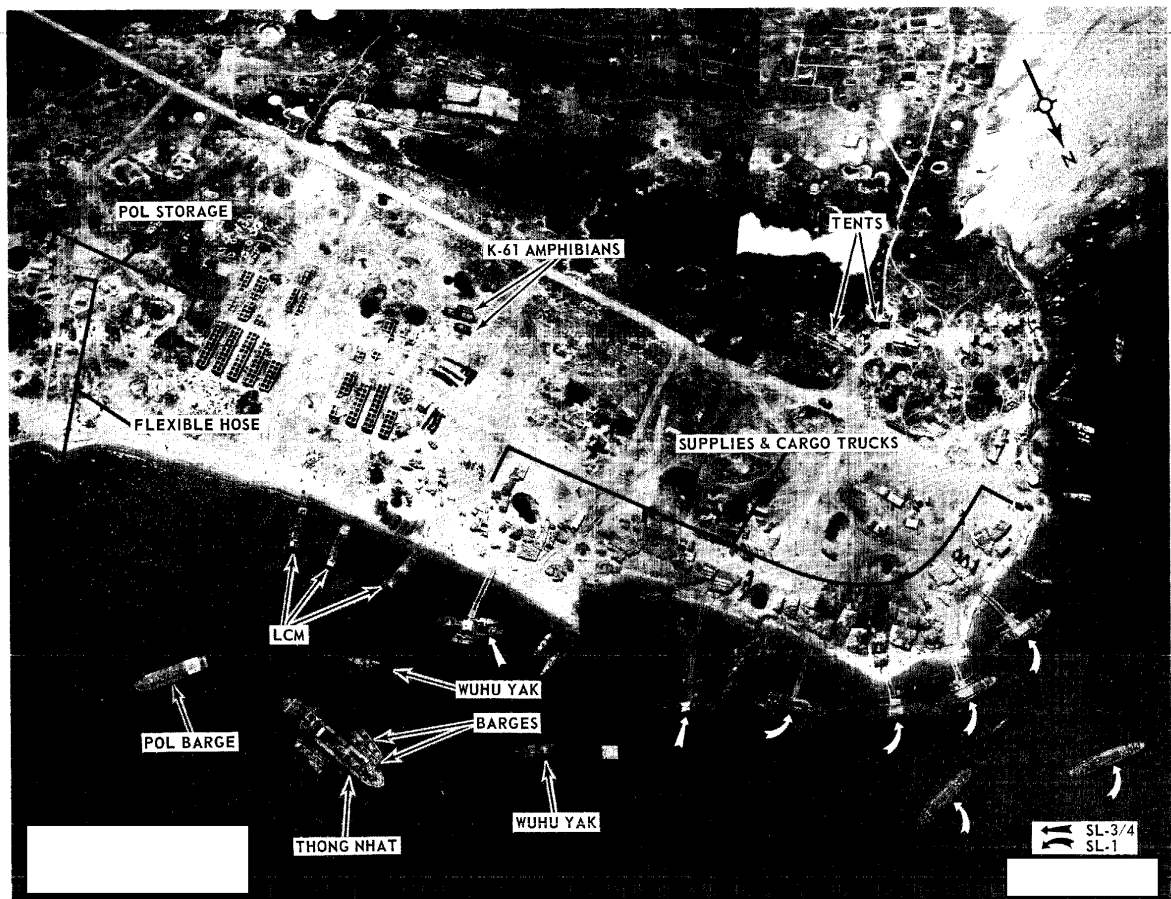


FIGURE 14. QUANG KHE TRANSSHIPMENT POINT, NORTH VIETNAM.

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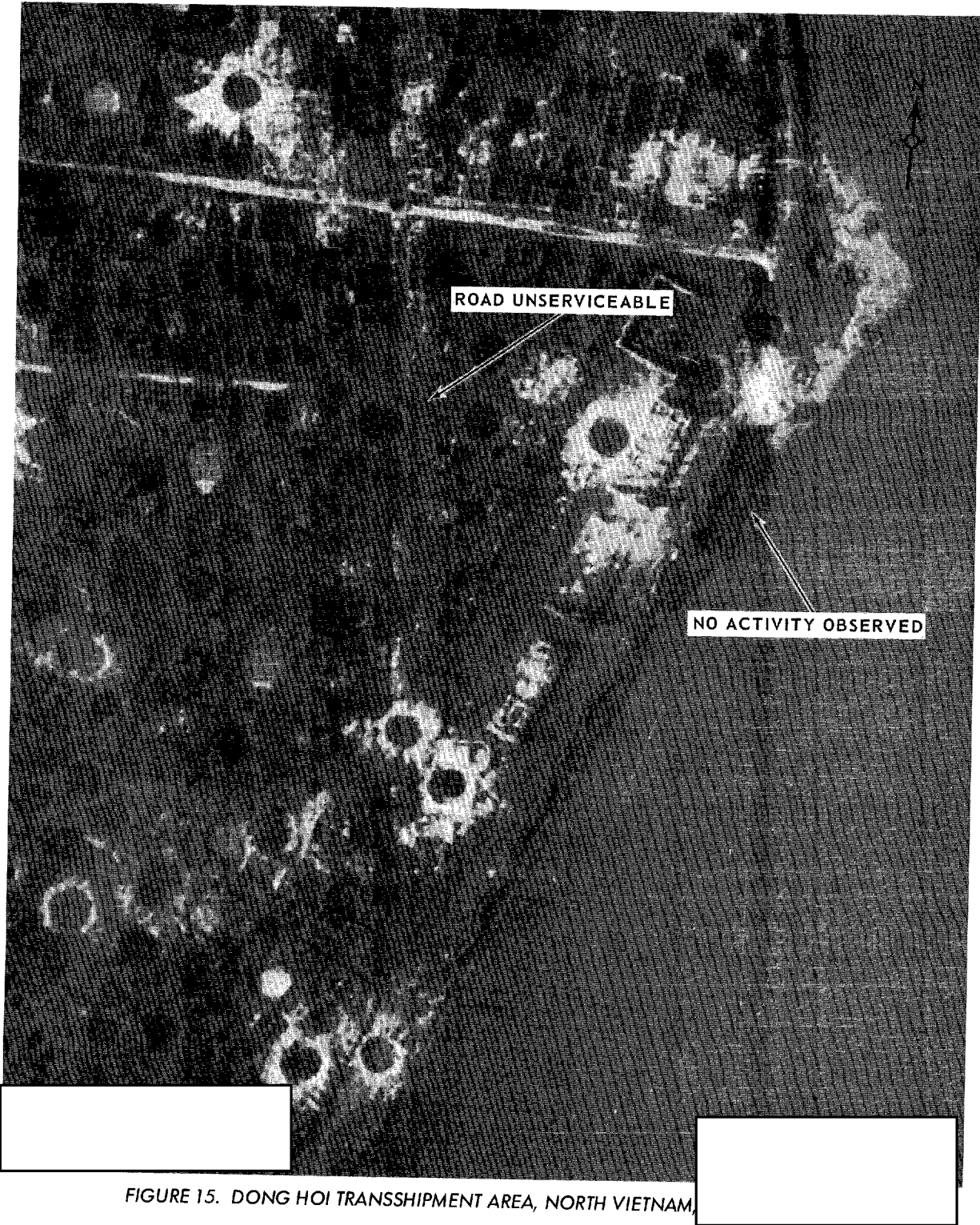


FIGURE 15. DONG HOI TRANSHIPMENT AREA, NORTH VIETNAM,

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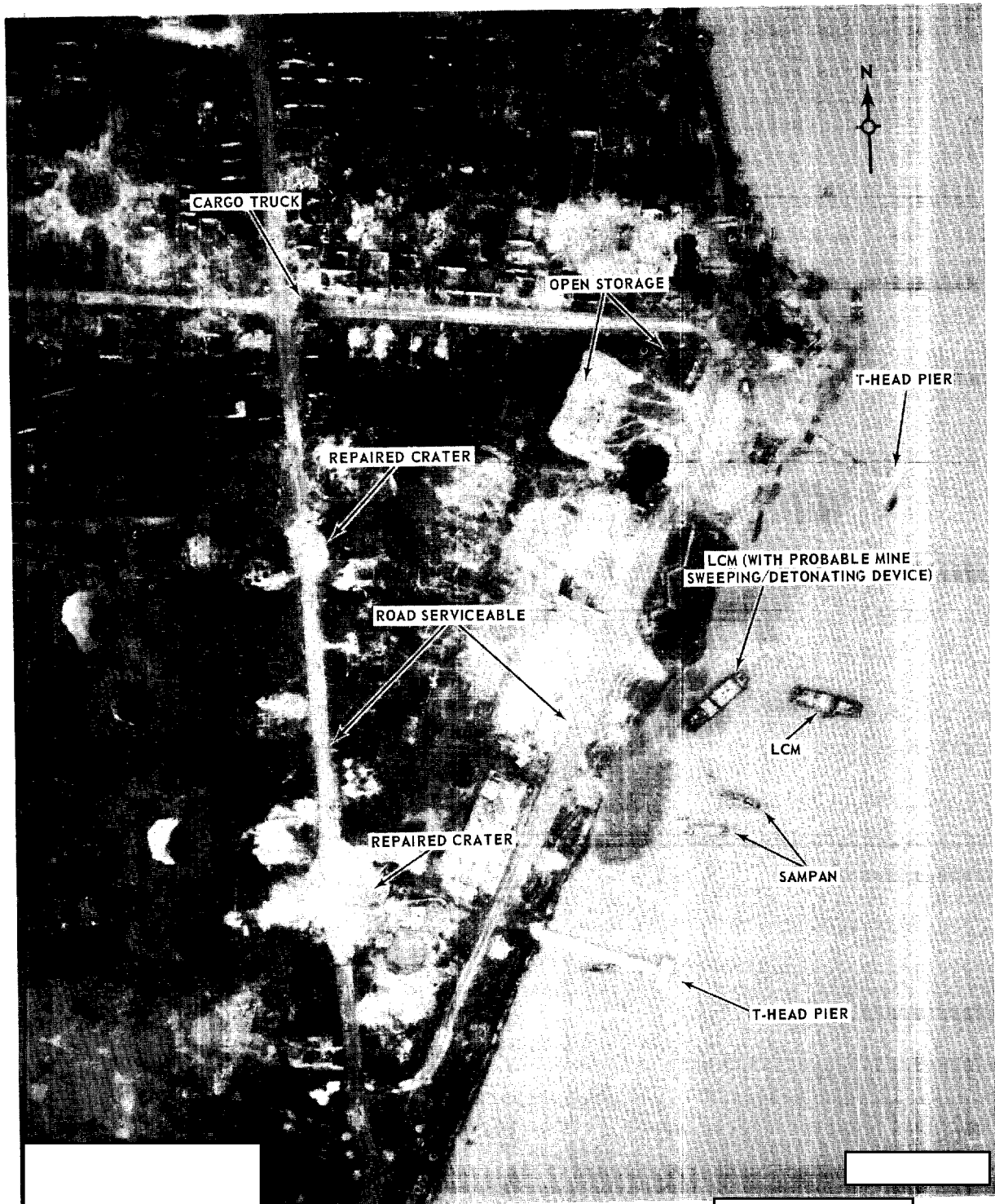


FIGURE 16. DONG HOI TRANSSHIPMENT AREA, NORTH VIETNAM

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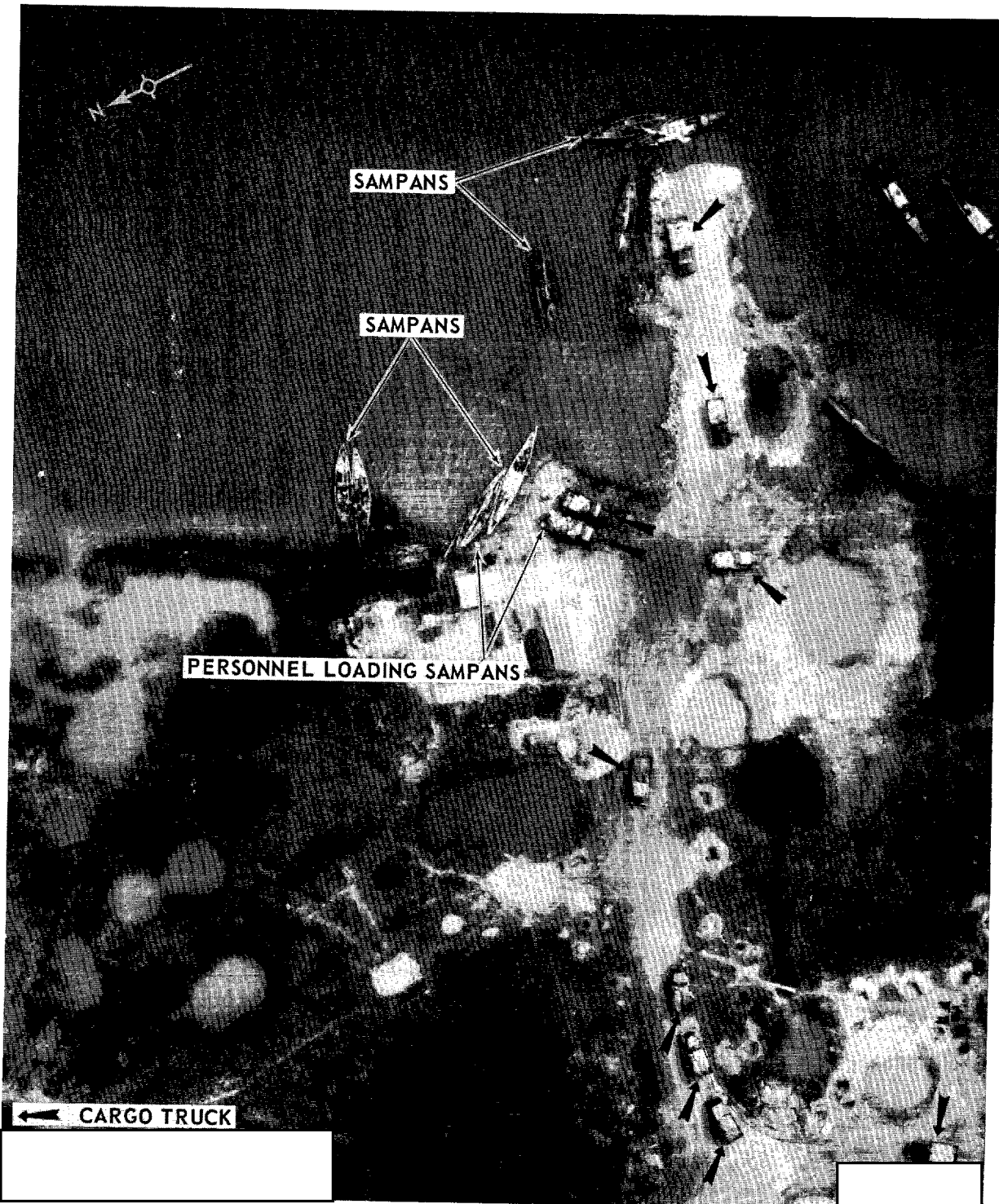


FIGURE 17. TRANSHIPMENT ACTIVITY, HUU HUNG RIVER CROSSING, NORTH VIETNAM.

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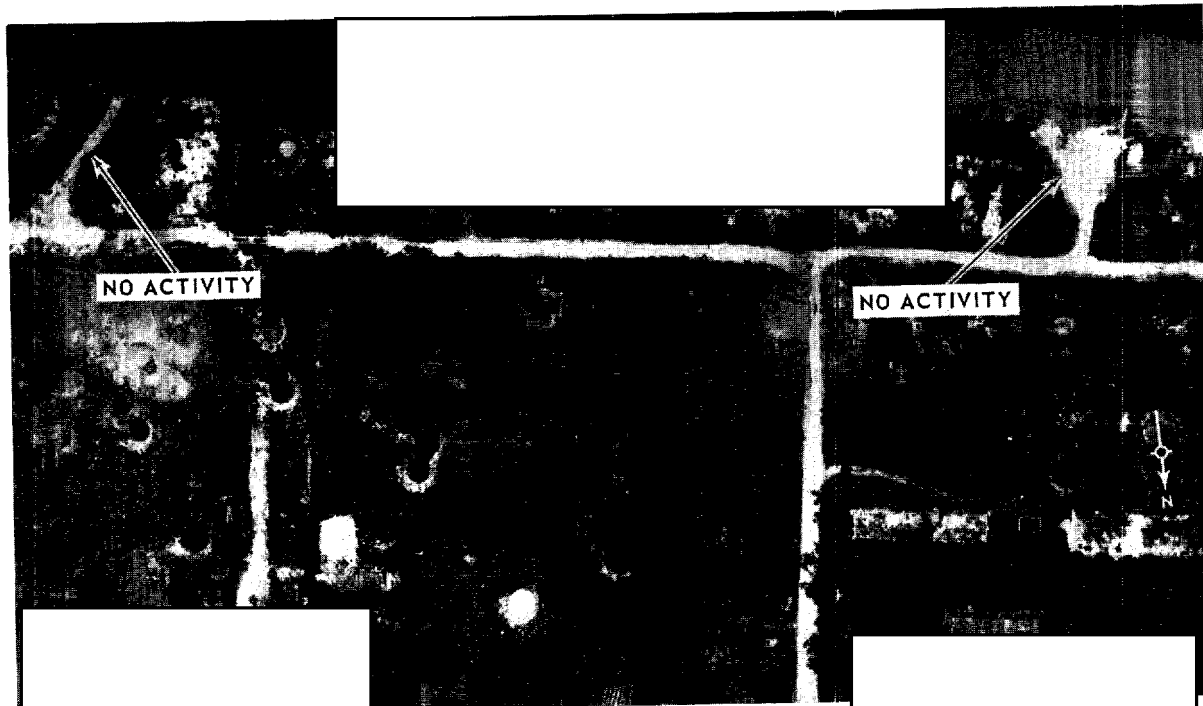


FIGURE 18. VINH TRANSSHIPMENT AREA, NORTH VIETNAM

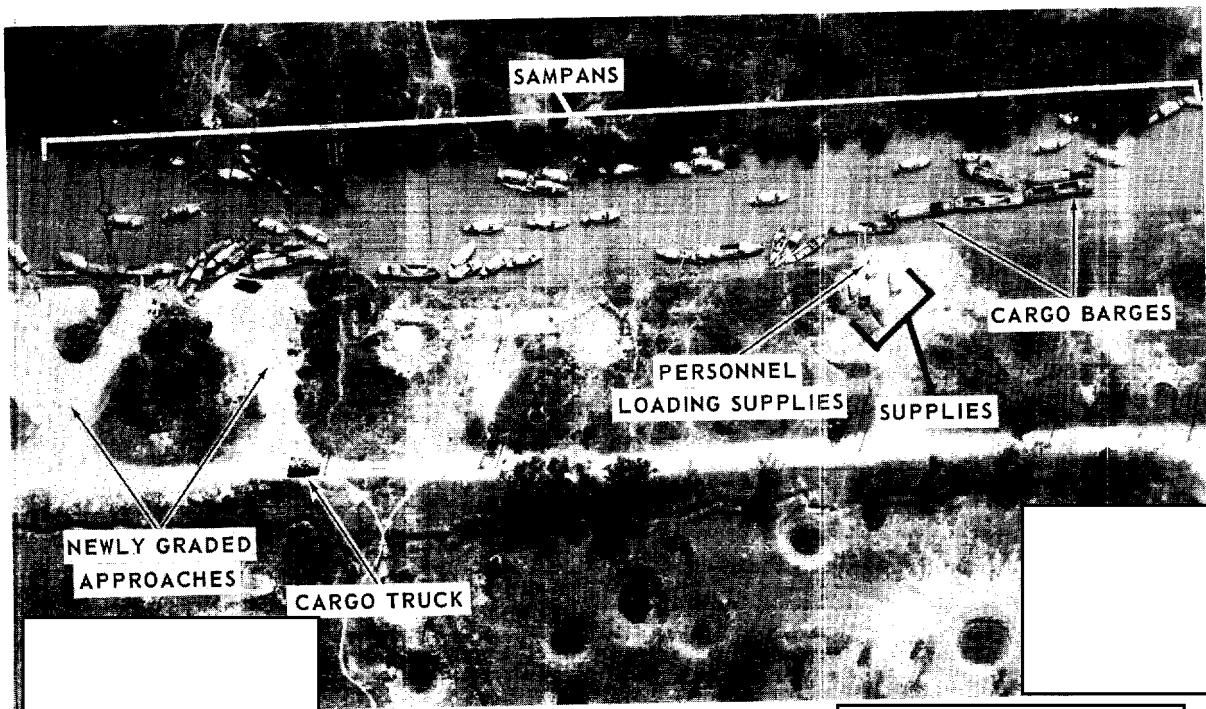


FIGURE 19. VINH TRANSSHIPMENT AREA, NORTH VIETNAM

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### AIR ACTIVITY

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Although the North Vietnamese possess a limited aerial resupply capability, no photographic evidence of its use subsequent [ ] has been identified. The only North Vietnamese air activity of note in the southern panhandle is the repair of Vinh Airfield. Craters in the natural-surface strip paralleling the runway were observed being filled and graded or rolled on photography [ ] and on coverage [ ]

the strip appeared serviceable. The main runway remains unserviceable. Mobile VIIF communications equipment is newly identified in the immediate vicinity of the airfield. The equipment consists of a van truck with a discone antenna, normally used in air-to-ground communications, and a single-axle generator. In view of the large resupply program underway in North Vietnam, it is possible that Vinh will be used by transport aircraft to augment the movement of supplies or troops.

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